

FS Education has six weeks to appeal book packer's award

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FS Education has six weeks to appeal book packer's award OLEBOGENG MOTSE 15:57 Wed, 21 Aug 2019 The Free State Education Department has a six-week window in which to appeal a damning arbitration ruling that could end up adding at least R22 million to its already bloated salary bill. Last week, the OFM News team revealed the General Public Service Sector Bargaining Council (GPSSBC) ruled in favour of a group of the department's former employees who used to work at ten learning material and stationery warehouses located across the province nearly two years ago. The roughly 250 applicants were represented by the Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) in arbitration proceedings initiated with the intention of having the applicants rehired permanently and remunerated. The award stipulates the department has to rehire between 167 and 170 of the applicants and remunerate them with almost R136 000 each. PSA labour relations officer, Jantjie Jack, tells OFM News indications are that the department will appeal the outcome. The department, on the other hand, is mum on the award and is yet to provide some sort of indication regarding the way forward. The award could be a sign of the worst to come for the department seeing that just under 100 applicants were removed from the application in the later stages of the arbitration proceedings with the PSA promising they will be added on later while hundreds of other former employees were represented by different unions and are said to be eagerly watching how the situation unfolds before taking their own steps. The PSA argues the department created a "reasonable expectation" when they renewed employees' contracts each year. The union stated the 2015 amendment to the Labour Relations Act regarding contract workers was in their favour, limiting contract work to three months, without a justifiable reason. It states: "Employment in terms of a fixed term contract (newly concluded or renewed) for longer than 3 months will be deemed to become permanent employment – with some exceptions (see below). Note – an employer cannot circumvent this provision by using successive fixed-term contracts limited to 3 months each. It is not the current contract period, but the total period of employment, that must not exceed 3 months." OFM News.